

## **‘We have a job to do’: Thousands more soldiers deploy from Fort Bragg**

Charles Duncan, 14 February 2022.

FORT BRAGG, N.C. — The soldiers walked single file down the tarmac at Pope Field, carrying their bags and rifles. Hundreds of troops, members of the 82nd Airborne Division, boarded planes Monday bound for Poland.

What You Need To Know

Another 3,000 soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division are deploying to Poland

They will join 3,000 soldiers who already deployed from Fort Bragg to Poland and Germany

The soldiers are going to support NATO troops as Russia continues to mass troops on the border with Ukraine

The Pentagon has said no U.S. troops will be on Ukrainian soil

Another 3,000 U.S. soldiers from Fort Bragg are deploying to Eastern Europe, joining 3,000 who left last month for Poland and Germany. The deployments come as Russia continues to amass troops on the border with Ukraine.

“At the end of the day, we have a job to do. This is something we signed up to do, we are the U.S. Army,” said Pfc. Joshua Jones of Cove City, North Carolina. Monday was his 21st birthday.

Pfc. Joshua Jones, 21, of Cove City, North Carolina, prepares for deployment. (Photo: Charles Duncan)

“Everybody seems to be in pretty high spirits,” he said, sitting in a hangar at Pope Army Airfield, waiting to board a flight for his first deployment.

Hundreds of troops waited in the hangar, eating pizza and drinking soda. Some chatted. Some napped. Some cleaned their rifles. They sat and stood in rows of long wooden benches, similar to what might be in an old train station.

Before boarding planes, the soldiers were ordered to hand over their phones, smart watches and other devices. Smartphones and other devices will not be allowed while the troops are overseas.

Outside on the tarmac, soldiers loaded supplies and equipment onto U.S. Air Force C-17 planes, massive jets that can carry more than 170,000 tons of cargo. Commercial jets waited near the runway to fly the troops to Eastern Europe.

“At first I was a bit nervous. But as the time went on, it was like, ‘OK, I can do this,’” said Sgt. Khristal Flake, 32, of Houston. This will be Flake’s first deployment in her four years with the Army.

“We’re going for a good cause, and we’re here to support each other,” she said. Within an hour, she would be boarding a plane for Poland.

President Joe Biden is deploying troops to Europe to bolster NATO forces in the area as Russia continues its buildup on the Ukrainian border. The Pentagon has said U.S. troops would not go into Ukraine, even if Russia did invade the former Soviet bloc nation.

The U.S. State Department has pulled many of its employees from Ukraine and told all U.S. citizens to leave the country, fearing a Russian invasion could come at any time.

Spc. Oscar Roldan, 28, of Orlando, Florida, said this will also be his first time deploying.

“I’m looking forward to being out there with our allies, hopefully getting some good training with them,” he said. “I’m excited.”

Spc. Oscar Roldan, 28, of Orlando, Florida, prepares for deployment. (Photo: Charles Duncan)

He said his family did not know he was about to deploy in the coming hours.

“Part of our job, part of the type of unit that we’re in, they don’t know too much about what we’re doing,” Roldan said.

“We’re super excited to stand shoulder to shoulder with Poland, let them know that we have their backs,” he said.

Over the course of several days, 3,000 from the 82nd Airborne Division will land in Poland.

The soldiers line up on the far end of the hangar. Once all their paperwork is in order and they have all their equipment, they file out the door one-by-one, walking in a line down the tarmac to the commercial planes waiting to take them overseas.